



## FORT BEND COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Fort Bend County, Texas

(281) 342-6185  
Fax (281) 342-4798

July 15, 2009

Bruce Liang Gottlieb  
Chief Counsel and Senior Legal Advisor  
Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Chairman  
Room 8-B201  
445 12th St. SW  
Washington, DC 20554

### **RE "AAIRO Petition for Ruling - PS Docket No. 09-19"**

Dear Mr. Gottlieb:

I am writing to you to emphasize concerns related to the above petition. I am the Emergency Management Coordinator of Fort Bend County, Texas. The County has a population 530,000 and is situated southwest of Houston. The county is directly north of the coastal counties of Galveston and Brazoria; two major evacuation routes run through our County.

The County is a licensed operator of a Travelers Information Station. We have an 80-foot tower constructed at our Emergency Operations Center specifically to provide support for the wireless audio link transmit antenna responsible for sending the audio program from the EOC to 10 low-powered AM stations that repeat the program at various points around the County. The system was designed to enhance the County's ability to communicate with all parts of our County, and especially with those evacuees that might be stuck in gridlock on our evacuation routes. I think it is important to note that FEMA, through its program to mitigate hazards, funded 75% of the radio station expense.

The above petition simply requests clarification of existing Travelers Information Station rules to clearly indicate that use of such stations for "common-sense" emergency situations is indeed appropriate and allowable. Fort Bend County does not favor a "rule-making" process favored by others. It is not necessary; and simply stated, the issues are clear cut and involve life safety matters. Our sentiment here in Fort Bend County dovetails with FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski who recently stated: "When disaster strikes, the ability to communicate is essential."

The above AAIRO petition is in line with Mr. Genachowski's comment. The Commission, if it desires, can move swiftly by issuing an interpretative ruling which would clarify existing rules to better permit transmission of "bulletins affecting the immediate welfare of citizens." By contrast, a rule making approach would take months--- if not years to achieve a similar goal.

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Last year, Hurricane Ike devastated the Gulf Coast in our region. We are now in the midst of the 2009 Hurricane Season. In Texas, because of severe drought, wildfires are an extreme threat at this time. And looming ahead is the prediction that the H1N1 Flu Event will revisit the United States with a vengeance during the fall months. It is important the rule clarification take place now so that the Travelers Information Stations can be part of the "tool belt" used by emergency managers to communicate with the public. These stations are invaluable in the effort to protect life and property.

Fort Bend County requests that the Commission act expeditiously and decisively on the AAIRO petition. The Communications Act demands no less when proclaiming a core FCC "purpose of promoting safety of life and property" through radio communication. Please issue the interpretive ruling that AAIRO requests.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jeff D. Braun", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff D. Braun  
Emergency Management Coordinator